



The Energy and Technology Committee

Public Hearing, March 1, 2016

Office of Consumer Counsel

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Testimony of Elin Swanson Katz

Raised H.B. No. 5311,

An Act Concerning Telecommunications Provider Tariffs For Services Offered To Business Retail End-Users And Certain Telecommunications Service-Related Reports.

The Office of Consumer Counsel (OCC) has carefully reviewed Raised H.B. No. 5311, *An Act Concerning Telecommunications Provider Tariffs For Services Offered To Business Retail End-Users And Certain Telecommunications Service-Related Reports*, and opposes the bill.

The filing of tariffs and the currently-required report filings are the only regulatory framework through which the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) and the OCC have legal ability to challenge telecommunications provider price increases or any other changes they would propose to service terms and conditions. Without this structure, if a telecommunications provider proposed some dramatic change to its service, PURA and the OCC will lack the evidentiary basis to protect phone consumers. A telecommunications provider may correctly claim that PURA or OCC could request service tariff information from a telecommunications provider on an *ad hoc* basis, that is, case-by-case, but that may lead to long and drawn-out legal battles that will serve to only slow justice.

Here is a useful illustration. A telecommunications provider makes a business decision to significantly increase the rates it charges for a certain tariffed service, or it changes a business practice that is the subject today of service-related reports. Without

the existing retail tariffs or service-related reports competitors and advocates like OCC cannot challenge such a change at PURA.

The filing of tariffs is an integral part of the regulatory framework through which OCC has the required information and to use their legal standing to effectively evaluate and challenge a telecommunications provider's prices changes.

Without such access to current pricing and service conditions, regulators will be forced into a weakened position from which to design any regulatory changes to service terms and conditions needed to effect public policy goals.